



New Jersey Office of Homeland Security & Preparedness **NEWS**

Jon S. Corzine, *Governor*

Richard L. Cañas, *Director*

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CORZINE, CAÑAS, TOP OFFICIALS CONDUCT PANDEMIC FLU EXERCISE

Tabletop Drill, Discussion Enhance Existing Programs, Fuel Future Planning

(WEST TRENTON) – Governor Jon S. Corzine and Homeland Security and Preparedness Director Richard L. Cañas gathered today with top State officials to conduct a Pandemic Influenza Exercise – a drill involving the fictional scenario of a deadly avian flu outbreak.

The drill, conducted as a “tabletop” or theoretical and logistical discussion, was held at New Jersey State Police Headquarters. It was designed to assess New Jersey’s ability to respond to a pandemic event; identify any communication gaps between State agencies; and help direct the State’s ongoing planning for a possible pandemic.

Governor Corzine and Director Cañas pointed out after today’s exercise that the drill is the most recent step in New Jersey’s long practice of planning for a possible pandemic flu outbreak. The Governor and Director held a news conference after the exercise with Attorney General Zulima V. Farber, Commissioner of Health and Senior Services Dr. Fred M. Jacobs, Secretary of Agriculture Charles M. Kuperus, and State Police Superintendent Rick Fuentes.

The Department of Health and Senior Services began preparing for an influenza pandemic in 1999 when they began development of their influenza plan. This plan has been refined and updated many times, shared with partners and stakeholders and posted on the Department website.

The Department of Agriculture routinely conducts tests at all live bird markets in New Jersey, and makes testing available to poultry producers who request it. If any of the preliminary tests indicate the existence of a form of avian influenza, the samples are sent to the USDA laboratory in Ames, Iowa for further testing. To date, no highly pathogenic form of avian influenza has been detected in New Jersey.

The Department of Environmental Protection’s Division of Fish and Wildlife has been monitoring wild bird and game bird health for more than 20 years. DEP has stepped up the effort to include surveillance of these birds for avian influenza.

(more)

Governor Corzine, responding to the ongoing concerns that the avian influenza strain “H5N1” could mutate into a form transmissible between humans, called for today’s exercise as part of his commitment to build on these existing programs and enhance New Jersey’s preparedness.

On May 31, the Governor and DHHS will host the New Jersey Pandemic Influenza Summit, at a location that will soon be announced. The event will feature Federal Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt along with other Federal health and security officials to describe national preparedness. Governor Corzine, Commissioner Jacobs and other state leaders will discuss State preparedness plans. The afternoon will feature two panel discussions covering a wide range of influenza pandemic preparedness issues.

To aid in pandemic influenza awareness, and to help individuals, families and businesses create their own plans for a pandemic event, the following State and Federal websites offer detailed information:

New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services’ Pandemic and Avian Influenza Web Page: <http://www.state.nj.us/health/er/avianflu.shtml>

New Jersey Department of Agriculture’s Avian Influenza Web Page: www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/ah/diseases/avian_influenza.html

Federal Government’s “One-Stop Shopping” page on Pandemic Flu Preparedness: www.pandemicflu.gov

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